NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
NEWS ANALYSIS NO. 1-0429 MARCH 24, 1976
CHARLES MEDD/NORTH CAROLINA

RETURNS FROM NORTH CAROLINA

ANNCR:

CHARLES MEDD WHO SPENT THE PAST SIX DAYS IN NORTH CAROLINA EXAMINES WHAT HAPPENED IN THIS WEEK'S PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY:

VOICE:

FOR RONALD REAGAN AND GEORGE WALLACE, NORTH CAROLINA WAS A BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL THAT, OF THE TWO, ONLY REPUBLICAN REAGAN MANAGED TO SURVIVE. AFTER FIVE STRAIGHT LOSSES TO PRESIDENT FORD THE REAGAN CAMPAIGN WAS IN DEEP TROUBLE AND THE CANDIDATE WAS UNDER MOUNTING PRESSURE TO ADANDON HIS CHALLENGE IN BEHALF OF PARTY UNITY. INSTEAD, MISTER REAGAN ABANDONED AN EARLIER PLEDGE NOT TO ATTACK A FELLOW REPUBLICAN AND HE DID SO AT THE RIGHT TIME AND THE RIGHT PLACE.

FOR ONE FULL WEEK THE FORMER CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR STRUCK OUT AT WHAT HE CALLED THE PRESIDENT'S LEADERSHIP FAILURES AND AMERICA'S RAPID DECLINE AS A MILITARY POWER, AT U.S.-SOVIET DETENTE AND AT SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER'S MANAGEMENT OF FOREIGN POLICY. IN A STATE WHERE PATRIOTISM IS TAKEN SERIOUSLY, THE CHARGE THAT THIS COUNTRY IS NO LONGER NUMBER ONE IN WORLD AFFAIRS, FOUND A RECEPTIVE AUDIENCE.

STILL THE REAGAN VICTORY CAME AS A SHOCK LARGELY BECAUSE NO PRESIDENT HAD EVER LOST A PRIMARY ELECTION FOR WHICH HE HAD ACTIVELY CAMPAIGNED, AND THERE WAS NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT NORTH CAROLINA REPUBLICANS WERE PREPARED TO MAKE HISTORY. BY DOING THE UNEXPECTED, VOTERS IN THIS SOUTHERN STATE HAD DELAYED FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD REPUBLICAN EFFORTS TO CLOSE RANKS.

THE PRESIDENT STILL ENJOYS A CONFORTABLE LEAD BUT THE NOMINATION THAT SEEMED SO CERTAIN A FEW DAYS AGO MAY NOT BE HIS WITHOUT A STRUGGLE. AS A RESULT THE REPUBLICANS WHO SPEND MOST ELECTION YEARS WATCHING THE DEMOCRATS FIGHT IT OUT, AND ENJOYING IT LESS. THE DEBATE COULD BE HEALTHY FOR BOTH THE PARTY AND THE COUNTRY.

AS FOR THE DEMOCRATS, THE VOTE IN NORTH CAROLINA PROVED SEVERAL THINGS--THAT JIMMY CARTER CAN NOT ONLY WIN STATE PRIMARIES BUT WIN THEM DECISIVELY.....THAT HE APPEALS TO VIRTUALLY EVERY KIND OF DEMOCRAT, RICH OR POOR, BLACK OR WHITE, AND THAT PARTY LEADERS, WHETHER THEY LIKE IT OR NOT, WILL HAVE TO TAKE HIM SERIOUSLY.

THE PRIMARY ALSO PROVED THAT SOUTHERN DEMOCRATS CAN GET ALONG WITHOUT GEORGE WALLACE. HIS ONE-SIDED DEFEAT IN A STATE HE EASILY CAPTURED JUST FOUR YEARS AGO SHOWS THAT THE SOUTH TODAY WANTS A NEW KIND OF SPOKESMAN. GOVERNOR WALLACE HAS BECAME AN ECHO OF THE PAST -- AN ECHO THAT'S GROWING MORE FEINT WITH EACH PASSING DAY.

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JS/RTD